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The Friday Newsletter

1630

No. 5

February 4, 1977

FOREST SERVICE RESPONDS TO WEATHER EMERGENCY: Secretary Bob Bergland has requested the Forest Service to help meet the national emergency caused by the abnormally cold winter and fuel shortages in the Midwest and East. We have responded by offering personnel, vehicles, equipment, shelter facilities, food caches, and other available supplies. All Forest Service offices have been instructed to volunteer manpower and equipment and supplies wherever emergencies exist, as declared by the President or State Governors.

Rules governing free use of firewood should be liberalized and the public informed by local radio and TV where and how it can be obtained. It may be appropriate in some instances to declare temporary free use areas where dead and down material will be available without permits.

We are providing daily reports to the Secretary on the facilities we have on hand and what we are doing to help during this emergency.

RPA PUBLIC PARTICIPATION CALENDAR: Air express shipments of review drafts of the 1980 RPA Assessment Outline and the Alternative Program Directions and Goals are scheduled to be made to the field between February 18 and 20. A press release, prepared by WO OI, will be furnished on February 22 with a date release of February 28. This will announce the availability of the two documents and should be localized to suit public involvement plans and activities. (Public comments will be invited during the ensuing 90 days.)

On March 15, shipments will also be made to the field of a public handout brochure that describes RPA and its requirements, including opportunities for public involvement.

On March 22, WO will also distribute to the field an RPA slide script program for general audiences.

Information considered helpful to the field in preparing regional RPA disaggregation booklets, based upon the 1975 Recommended Program, has been sent from the WO.

SPEECH BRIEF ON GRAZING AND FEES: In view of the national importance of grazing on NFS lands, and fees, and the combined influence of the BLM Organic Act, RPA, and NFMA, this week's issue contains a digest of a speech that I presented to the American National Cattlemen's Association in Atlanta on February 2. Copies of the entire text are available from the editor of the Friday Newsletter.

PERSONNEL ACTION:

NA--William Herbolzheimer, Staff Assistant, promoted to Staff Director, Cooperative Fire, NA.

WO--Pete Wingle, Assistant Director, Recreation, reassigned to Staff Director, Recreation, Range, and Wildlife, R-9.

LEGISLATION:

Critical Lands Resource Conservation Act: Rep. Poage, English, Sebelius, and Thone have introduced H.R. 2729, a bill aimed at preventing soil loss in the Great Plains area. The bill would authorize the Secretary of Agriculture to enter into 2-year contracts with landowners to convert marginal croplands to soil-conserving cover crops. Landowners would receive an incentive of up to \$30 an acre and, after the first 2-year period, could negotiate annual renewals. Cover crops planted under the program could not be grazed or harvested. Sponsors of the bill project that 15 million acres could be treated at an annual cost of \$450 million.

Boundary Waters Canoe Area: On January 31, Rep. Fraser placed in the Congressional Record lengthy remarks on his latest bill to establish a Boundary Waters Wilderness. The bill, H.R. 2820, would establish the entire BWCA as wilderness and would specifically prohibit logging, mining and mineral leasing, and use of motorized recreational vehicles. It would add 35,000 acres of National Forest, State, county, and private lands to the wilderness and increase payments to the three counties to 1-1/4 percent of the value of these lands. Fraser's remarks appear on pages H 621-624 of the January 31 Congressional Record.

Farm Bill includes Forest Service Programs: On January 18, Senator Talmadge, Chairman of the Committee on Agriculture and Forestry, introduced S. 275--The Food and Agriculture Act of 1977, an omnibus farm bill. While most of the bill would authorize commodity food stamp and pesticide regulation programs, several items would significantly impact Forest Service activities.

Title VIII of the bill covers Food and Agricultural Research, which is defined to include research in silviculture and water and soil resources. Title VIII emphasizes funding and coordination of agricultural research. To achieve this, S. 275 would establish a three-level structure to recommend research policy, coordinate projects, and improve dissemination and utilization of agricultural research results.

In addition, S. 275 also would extend the Rural Community Fire Protection Program through September 30, 1980, and authorize \$7 million annually.

Finally, S. 275 would provide new cooperative authority for rescue operations on the National Forests. This section is identical to the bill introduced in the last Congress by Senator Church.

Senator Talmadge made it clear in his introductory remarks on S. 275 that the bill is "a base from which the legislative process can go forward" and that he expects several improving amendments to be made during the legislative process. The Department has been asked to prepare a legislative report on S. 275. Different sections have been doled out among agencies. ARS has the lead on the Research title. Forest Service will make input to ARS on this title.

Thomas R. Jones
Acting Chief

SPEAKER: Chief John R. McGuire DATE: February 2, 1977
AUDIENCE: American National Cattlemen's Association, Atlanta.
TITLE: Grazing on National Forests--Risks and Assurances

First of all, the courts have always declared that use of the National Forest System for livestock grazing is a privilege and not a right. These are public lands, whose ownership rests with the entire public--the "State," as defined under English common law. Use of the lands under permit in no way authorizes more than occupancy for livestock grazing. Secondly, the privilege is granted to an individual, rather than being tied to a parcel of land and passed on to succeeding owners.

But, even considering these policy guidelines, I do not foresee any deemphasis in grazing on the National Forest System. As I've indicated, we are going into the second year of the current 10-year term permits. Policies concerning tenure of use, maximum permit size and ownership of land and livestock as a permit requirement, remain essentially the same as they have for many years. New Forest Service grazing regulations to be published soon will continue this direction.

These regulations are in line with the Federal Land Policy and Management Act of 1976, commonly called the BLM Organic Act. Although this law was designed specifically to provide BLM with a management charter, it also gave direction on some aspects of National Forest System grazing.

Fees on the National Forest System have increased from an average of 60 cents per AUM in 1969 to approximately \$1.60 per AUM in 1977, with fair market value estimated at \$1.94. The BLM Organic Act froze 1977 fees at 1976 levels on both Forest Service and BLM grazing land.

A second major law affecting livestock grazing on the National Forests is the Forest and Rangeland Renewable Resources Planning Act of 1974, as amended by the National Forest Management Act of 1976.

The RPA Assessment indicates that National Forest range can be developed and managed to meet higher production levels, and still remain cost-effective. Cost-effectiveness was a prime consideration in choosing among alternative programs. While some other resources showed a higher cost-benefit ratio, the range program was well within our acceptable standards.

We believe that we can develop the National Forest System ranges to produce needed levels of grazing, and still correct unsatisfactory conditions. If we have to reduce livestock numbers in an area to meet range condition goals, or to promote more efficient resource allocation, we will phase in the reductions over a period of time. In this way, we hope the impacts on existing permittees will be lessened.

We believe the livestock permittee will find continued opportunities for grazing on the National Forest ranges. Our studies predict increasing demand for it. With adequate investments, we feel that these lands can meet this demand.

However, the user and his banker must recognize that adjustments may be necessary. Changing public attitudes, demand for additional uses, Congressional direction, and prospects of limited Federal funds may prevent full realization of the potential of these Federal lands for livestock grazing. But, by working together, I think we can minimize the impact of any changes, and strive for a range program that meets the needs of both ranchers and the general public. We can indeed insure that financing the Federal land livestock user is worth the risk.

----- NFMA-BLM ORGANIC ACT- -----
IMPLEMENTATION UPDATE

TM HOLDS PUBLIC MEETING: Audience interest of those who attended the Timber Management public information meeting held in Washington on January 31 centered around the requirements of sealed and oral bidding, the determination of what constitutes a dependent community, and the option of small businesses to elect that the Forest Service build timber sale roads. Present were about 30 representatives of industry, environmental groups, Congressional staffs, the press, and other national organizations.

The meeting was hosted by TM to discuss the timber management requirements of the NFMA, and the proposed regulations for timber sales. It was pointed out that there are three mechanisms available to the Forest Service for implementing the NFMA: 1) Secretary's regulations; 2) the Forest Service Manual (in which the timber section is being updated); and 3) timber sales contract provisions. The Secretary's regulations are broad guidelines, but the FSM will be quite specific. The proposed Secretary's permanent timber sale regulations--as required by NFMA--are due to be published soon in the Federal Register. There will be a 30-day period for public comment. The Forest Service timber sale program has been operating under temporary regulations since last November.

GRAZING FEE ANALYSIS UNDER WAY: An analysis of grazing fees on BLM and NFS lands will be conducted by a joint task force from the Forest Service and BLM. The BLM Organic Act requires the two agencies to review the means of determining fees charged western livestock operators for grazing their livestock on Federal lands, and to submit a report to Congress. The Act also requires that no change can be made in fees before the report goes to Congress, due October 21.

The task force will consider recommendations made by a technical committee established last summer to review the grazing fee schedule. That committee's report was published in the February 4 issue of the Federal Register.

The agencies have called for interested persons to submit data, comments and suggestions that would be helpful for the analysis. A series of public meetings for this purpose have been set for Rapid City, S.D., on March 7; Missoula, Mont., March 9; Boise, Idaho, on March 11; Reno, Nev., on March 14; Denver, Colo., on March 16; Albuquerque, N.M., on March 19; and Washington, D.C., on March 23.

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PROCUREMENT SECTION
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